

Down the Black Hole by [jhuniemarieilarde](#)

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Summary: Hopper has been imprisoned for a long time and he's fine with it knowing that the people he cares about are safe but when the Russians started looking for Joyce, he needs to know why and how he'll be able to save her. Joyce started a new life out of Hawkins but something is odd. She's feeling it. The kids know it. Did she really survive that night or something strange is going on.

1. Chapter 1

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA - It's been god knows how many days, weeks, months since Hopper was brought to the prison cell he's in. At first, he thought he might still be somewhere in Hawkins but he figured that most of his co-prisoners are Russians that he's not in America anymore. He has endured a lot of torture already. He has been drugged, beaten up, all because they wanted to know who he's working for. Of course, they always got the same answer: Hawkins PD. It's not like he's a CIA agent or something. It just so happen that the kids in Hawkins always figure out something strange going on around them and he's the person to call.

The soldiers came into his cell and brought him to another room. This time, it's not the torture room where they like to beat the shit out of him. It's a solid white room with bright lights which made his eyes hurt since it's been awhile since sunlight grace his eyes its presence. What bothers him the most is that there is a TV in front of him which is bizarre? Have they thought he might be getting bored so needs a TV? The door opened and General Molotov came in. Yeah, it's uncanny. He laughed at Murray for making up that name down in that facility but he actually existed only he is not a lieutenant but he's a general.

"Evening, Mr. Hopper", he greeted with a smile on his face.

Yeah...it's odd. He rarely smile at him whenever he decided to pay him a visit. Actually, he thought that he might die soon because the Russians are running out of patience for him. The general must be in a good mood.

"If you're here to ask me who do I work for, you're wasting your time. I already told you a million times. I am the Chief of Police of Hawkins and that's it", Hopper already put it out there to save them time or rather save his ears from hearing the same question over and over again.

General Molotov laughed at his amusement. He picked a chair and sat in front of Hopper just to get to his level.

"Oh, Mr. Hopper...you have such high spirit. On the contrary, I am not here to ask you that sickening question", he said.

Hopper frowned.

"No? Oh..." he muttered in surprise.

"No. I am here to ask you a different question and a much important one. I want to know where the girl is", General Molotov asked.

Hopper felt his heart beats a little faster. They know about El? Of course, they know about her. The Mind Flayer was after her and it followed her to the Starcourt Mall. Some of his men must've seen her use her powers.

"I don't know", Hopper said.

General Molotov smiled a little before turning into serious mode.

"We already checked the entire town of Hawkins and she seems to be gone from the place. You're close to her so I figured you must know where she went", he clarified.

That's good, he thought. Joyce must have taken her with her. He knows Joyce was already planning on leaving Hawkins before the whole magnet thing started. Back when they were at the facility, she said that she would see how things will go between them and that would decide if she'll move or not. Of course, the date never happened because she might think now that he's dead so naturally, she moved her entire family out of Hawkins and took El with her. His daughter is safe.

"If she's not there, I don't know where she is. In case you forgot, you kept me here for so long. I have no idea where she is", Hopper lied.

It is a lie because he knows where Joyce wanted to move to. She mentioned it to Gary and Gary told him about it.

"Listen, I don't want to keep hurting you because it is beginning to bore me so I'll just put it this way, you tell me where the girl is and I will let you go back to your home in Hawkins", General Molotov offered.

Hopper knows it's a trick to make him talk. It might be true but even though he truly let him go, his men would be halfway there to take his daughter and make her their lab experiment. He will not take that chance.

"I already told you. I don't know where she went. She's a kid. She can go anywhere she damn please", he said.

General Molotov shook his head and laughed.

"Oh, I think we're not understanding each other. I wasn't asking you to tell me the location of your daughter, Mr. Hopper", he said.

"Then what girl are you talking about?" Hopper asked.

"I want to know where Joyce Byers is", General Molotov answered.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS – Will and El are in the living room working on their homework when Joyce came out of her room dressed up in a rocker outfit with a short skirt. Her hair is longer than usual which she lets on a messy wave hanging behind her back. Her eyes are dark and her lips are red. Will watches his mother as she sprays on some perfume. El saw Will watching and she grabbed his hand as some sort of comforting gesture.

"Kids, you know your bedtime, right? I'll be home later. Love you", Joyce said and the two nodded before she left.

"I hate it when she has to go there every night", Will muttered.

"I know, me too, but she works there. Don't worry. She said that it's temporary", El said to him.

"I hope so", he replied.

Joyce arrived at a bar called Shot House. The place is packed with people already half drunk. She made her way amongst the crowd and started serving beers. After a few hours, she, herself, is already taking shots until she's drunk enough to dance around with guys she doesn't even know.

"I heard the room at the back is nice", one of the guy whispered in her ear.

"Well, I guess we should check it out", she replied and the two went to the back of the bar.

Without a word, the two started kissing as soon as they got in the storage room. Surprisingly, Joyce is more aggressive than him which makes it more exciting for the guy. Her hands roamed around his body until she pushed him back. He hit the wall pretty hard.

"Wow, you working out or something?" he asked her but she's not in the mood for talking.

Joyce just smiled as she walks closer to him. The door locked as she grabbed his leather jacket and pulled him to her for a kiss. While they are taking each other's clothes, Joyce's nose started to bleed. She then saw her reflection on the mirror on the wall across from her where she saw that she got blood coming out of her nose. Then, she wiped it off casually and continued the activity she's currently involved in.

Her shift ended at five in the morning but she got past six. She made her way to the kitchen before finding the chair to crash on. She's too drunk to even realize Will is already there. Her son just stared at her before going back inside his room quietly and dialed on the phone.

"Hey, it's me. I know what time it is but I need to talk to you. It's about Mom. I know. I know. It's just that something is wrong. She's been drinking a lot every night even when she's not working at the bar. No. I am telling you, a lot. She looks drunker than Dad. I don't know what to do. Please...can you help me? Yeah...okay. I will see you. Thanks", Will said to the phone and then hung up.

2. Chapter 2

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA - *"I want to know where Joyce Byers is", General Molotov answered.*

That sentence rang inside Hopper's head like a thousand times. How the hell they know her name? Yes, she's with him when they broke into the lab under the mall but it's not like she's well-known. Now, they're looking for her.

"Why are you looking for Joyce?" he asked.

"So we got your attention now, I see. Well, let's just say we developed an interest towards your friend. She became important to our work", General Molotov answered.

Work. What work? Joyce is a mother of two, now three, probably still working in sales in some other town. How can she be important to the Russians?

"What do you want with her?" he asked again sounding more and more protective which amused the general even more.

"Do you remember what happened that night when you blew off that machine?" the general asked and he nodded. "When she turned those keys, something incredible happened. Those things on the other side are very smart beings, Mr. Hopper. You can say they always have some contingencies planned out. They have anticipated that the gate will be closed again so they executed their contingency plan", he added.

"So what's Joyce got to do with it?" Hopper asked.

"That thing has become her. Of course, you would say it entered her", General Molotov answered.

Hopper frowned at his answer. It doesn't make sense because the Mind Flayer's gross weapon was at the mall trying to get to El and they were down the basement. The general saw the disbelief in his eyes so he signaled to one of the soldiers to open the TV.

"We have transmission of all footages from our sites. We reviewed the tape over and over again until we can make sure that what we're seeing is real. Watch and you will see what I mean, Mr. Hopper", he said.

The TV went on and it showed the lab at the mall where the machine was. Hopper then saw himself as he fought the tall Russian guy and Joyce inside the control room. After he threw the guy into the machine, huge waves of electricity blocked his way going back to Joyce and then she turned the keys and the machine blew up. It's the same thing he already knew, nothing out of the ordinary.

"Perhaps you didn't get it because it's kind of fast. Can we slow it down for Mr. Hopper?" General Molotov said and one of the soldiers slowed the footage.

Hopper paid close attention to the screen. He wants to see why the Russians are after Joyce. Then, he saw it. Right after Joyce turned the keys and the machine was about to explode, a flash of light came out of the portal and went straight to the control room and hit Joyce. Of course, with the explosion, it could all be interpreted as an impact but it's no impact. He saw it came out of the portal and went straight to her.

"Now, you see why we need to find Joyce Byers. She'll be the next step in our discovery", General Molotov explained.

His temper is starting to go off the roof. First, El was taken from her mother so the US government can experiment on her and her abilities. Now, the Russian government wanted to take Joyce so they can experiment on her. They are not lab rats.

"I don't know where she is and even if I do, I will never tell you", Hopper said.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS - Joyce opened her eyes and the headache hit her fast. It's the hangover. She got up and noticed she hasn't changed her clothes from last night. Her hair is all messed up and her makeup is smudged.

"Shit", she muttered once she realized what time it is.

She quickly ran to the kitchen only to find that she's all alone in the house. There is a note in the fridge from El and Will saying they've already taken care of everything and that they went to school. She squeezed her eyes tight thinking how she's screwing up as a mother. How can she be so reckless? She tried to recall the events of last night. She remembered getting into the bar, serving beers, and then drinking some. After that, it's all blurry. She doesn't even remember getting home or how she ended up on her bed. The phone ringing snapped her out of her thoughts.

"Hello? Yeah, it's me. Oh, hi...you're in town? No. They already went to school. Now? Oh, okay. Sure. I'll be here waiting", she answered then hung up.

Half an hour later, Joyce opened the door and Murray came in. He was a bit shocked to see how she looked like but he bit his tongue.

"What a place..." he muttered.

"A mess, that's what it is. Can I get you something? Water? Juice? Beer?" she asked as soon as she closed the door.

"I would say vodka but I'm pretty sure you don't have that so I would go with beer", Murray answered and Joyce quickly went to the kitchen and get some.

She handed him a bottle when she came back and the two sat on the couch to talk.

"Joyce, how are you doing?" he can't help but ask. It's not like they're strangers after all. They've been through hell together.

"Fine. We're fine", she said then drank her beer.

"Are you really? I know we haven't known each other for years but I've spent enough time with you to know if something is bothering you. You can talk to me", he pushed the question.

Joyce scoffed.

"I can still see his face, you know. He looked right at me and nodded. He fucking nodded like he's telling me, 'it's fine. You can do it' but it's not okay. He knew it's not okay for me to do it. He could just run or jump or whatever it will take to get the hell out of there but no. He looked right at me, nodded, and smiled", she started pouring it out.

"Joyce, it's not your fault. You didn't kill Jim", Murray said reading between lines.

"Yeah? It doesn't feel like it. I fucking pulled the trigger. I looked back at him and turned those damn keys. I pulled the trigger", she said and continued drinking her beer at rapid speed.

Murray watched her as she drowns herself with beer. It is a surprise to him because that's not the Joyce he met couple of months earlier. Hopper was the drinker but not her. She tends to smoke a lot but not alcohol.

"Joyce..." he called when he noticed she might be having a panic attack.

"I think you should leave", she muttered under her breath.

"What?" he asked.

"Leave!" she yelled and the lights started flickering as the picture frames hanging on the walls around them dropped.

They looked at each other for a while before blood dripped from her nose. Then, she passed out.

"Joyce? Joyce? Jesus...Joyce?" Murray tried to wake her in panic as he held her head in his arm.

3. Chapter 3

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS - Murray never left Joyce's side until she comes to. He handed her a glass of water as soon as she opens her eyes. He waited for her until she gathered enough strength for her to talk.

"What happened?" she asked in a weak voice.

The hangover is already gone from her head but she still feels like she hasn't slept in a week.

"You passed out. Joyce, what's going on here? You know I'm not new to all the strange things that happened. Please, I need you to talk to me because I need to understand whatever this is", Murray pleaded.

Joyce sat right up and then took a deep breath.

"I'm not really sure. There were times that I can't remember stuff like a blackout or something. At first, I thought it's because I am working in a bar..."

"Hold on a sec. You work in a bar? Why the hell you're working in a bar?" he asked cutting her off.

"Murray, Jonathan is studying at NYU. I now have El so that makes me a mother of three. Working for the department store is not going to be enough with raising three of them so yes, I am working in a bar", Joyce answered slightly irritated by the judgment in his voice. Murray rest his case. "Anyway...like I said, at first I thought it's because I work late at night and sometimes I drink at work but it's been happening frequently and I have high tolerance when it comes to alcohol so I don't get drunk that easily. Like last night, I can't remember how I got here. It's all bizarre", she continued.

"That's really blacking out. You haven't had that before?" he asked.

"No. I tried talking to Dr. Owens. Jonathan suggested that it could be good for me to talk to someone about things and I couldn't see a regular shrink because I can't tell them that we encountered Russian soldiers who wanted to open the gate to another dimension so I

called Owens. He thought it could be just depression or something because of what happened with Hopper. I mean, it made sense right. I feel guilty about it. I still feel guilty about it", Joyce answered.

"Yeah, but depression doesn't make someone nose's bleed and make the frames on the wall fall down", he mentioned.

Joyce frowned and then looked around to see the broken frames all around the floor.

"What the hell..." she muttered.

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA – Hopper was brought back to his cell. As usual, he was drugged again by the Russians to make him talk. He resisted for a good five hours of interrogation while under the influence of drugs but no man is strong enough to resist a large amount of that substance forever. He gave them the general area of Illinois. He managed to keep Chicago out of their ears. Illinois is a big state. They can be anywhere.

He can still feel the effect of the drugs but not as strong as before. He leaned back against the wall and stared at the ceiling. Past memories started rushing back at him.

HAWKINS, INDIANA (23 years ago) – It's the middle of the night and there's one place left open in town: the Pool Hub. Hopper got in the bar and high fived the bouncers on his way in. He is a patron of the place as he's always there every night. He made his way to the bar to get himself a drink when he saw someone familiar sitting next to him. She got raven black hair and wearing all black ensembles. She's playing with a glass of scotch on her hand and a stick of cigarette on the other.

"Horowitz? Joyce Horowitz?" he called and the woman turned to him.

She smiled upon seeing his face.

"James Hopper, so nice to see you here", she greeted.

"Are you allowed to be in here? You're a minor. How did you get in here?" he asked.

"Same way you got in here. You're just a year older than me, Hopper, in case you forgot. So, you're here often", she answered then asked him back.

He only shook his head in disbelief and chuckled. He's aware of her reputation at school, the resident bad girl with an impressive GPA. It's a deadly combination.

"Yeah...I'm here often. What you drinking?" he asked.

"Scotch...you know all the girls at school are pining for you, ready to drop on their knees for your attention and I never know the reason why", she answered.

Hopper was taken aback by how blunt she said all of that. It's not sarcastic or rhetorical. She's just plain curious.

"I don't know about the pining thing and dropping on their knees thing but that's kind of flattering if it's true", he said embarrassed to admit that he likes the attention.

"Oh, it is true. They must've seen something in you that I can't", she replied.

He smiled. She is just so honest and open.

"If it makes it better, I know a lot of guys who are pining for your attention and would drop on their knees for you to even look at them", he mentioned.

Joyce's eyes dropped on the floor. She shook her head and then took a sip on her glass. Hopper got confused if he had said something that offended her.

"Those were nothing. Same guys who will do just about anything to get what they want and when they succeeded, they will vanished for good, never to be seen again", she muttered.

He remembered how her father cheated on her mother all over the

town until her mother kicked him out of the house. Of course, it left a mark on her and her view of the world. She's not flattered by the attention. She doesn't even care for them.

"I think you're really beautiful", the words suddenly slipped out of his mouth.

She turned to him surprise by what he said, even him was surprised. Joyce suddenly broke down laughing.

"I think you should pass with the alcohol tonight, buddy", she teased and he laughed as well. "Want to smoke outside?" she offered and he nodded.

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA – Hopper woke up at the sound of the door banging against the wall on the cell next to his. It's them again taking another prisoner which they never returned to their cell. His best guess is their dead already. He smiled suddenly at the thought of him being next. At least, all the pain will stop and they cannot torture him anymore to reveal things about people he cares for.

"Yeah...I am going to die in this hell hole", he muttered to himself.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS – Murray told Joyce about what happened right before she passed out. She couldn't believe it herself but given the way she's been acting lately and the constant blackout, it might've been possible that's something's wrong with her.

"Can you do me a favor?" she asked of him.

"Anything", he answered.

"I need to follow me. I need you to watch whatever I will do especially at the bar. I need to know what's happening to me during those times that I cannot remember", she said.

4. Chapter 4

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS - It's almost nine in the evening when Jonathan arrived at the house. He found Will and El at the kitchen eating some pepperoni pizza. Will immediately got off his seat and hugged his big brother while El followed after.

"Where is she?" Jonathan asked.

He found his mother inside her bedroom fixing her hair. He looked at her from head to toe. She's wearing a maroon tank top and black leather pants. He knows she got a second job at a bar but he doesn't know her dress code for that job.

"Mom", he called.

Joyce almost jumped in the air at the sound of her son's voice who she thought is in New York.

"Jonathan? What are you doing here? Is it school break already?" she asked as she walks towards him and hugged him tight. Jonathan hugged her back smelling her strong perfume. She never wore perfume before.

"No. Will called me. He's worried about you", he answered.

Joyce pulled back and looked at him. She frowned at his answer and tried to comprehend why her youngest would worry about her.

"I don't understand. What's the matter?" she asked.

"He said you've drinking every night and you always come home drunk. I know what happened with Hopper was really awful and I can't even comprehend how difficult it was for you to be the one to do it but you saved all of us from that thing. It's not your fault. It's the Russians. You don't have to destroy yourself, Mom", he answered.

Joyce couldn't believe she's hearing that from her son. It sounded to her like he's comparing her to his father which is the worst thing anyone can do to her. She always tries her best to be the best mom she can be and it's a low blow for her for someone to compare her to

Lonnie.

"It's not like that, Jonathan. Yeah, I drink sometimes because I have to. I mean, I work in a bar. There were times where I have to. It's hard to explain. I'm sorry if I caused your brother to worry and that you have to come here for this", she said.

"Mom, I think you should find another second job. I think working in a bar is not good for you especially right now. It's not healthy", Jonathan suggested.

Joyce looked at her son in disbelief.

"Jonathan, I am not your father", she muttered.

"Well, you're starting to become like him", Jonathan snapped and that's it for Joyce.

She got the confirmation she doesn't want to have. Her temper is rapidly rising but she bit her tongue to keep herself from saying something she will regret in the morning. She looked down at the floor and took a deep breath before turning back to her son.

"I'm sorry you feel that way. I'm late for work", she replied and left the room.

Jonathan followed her to the living room.

"Mom...I'm sorry. Wait. We should talk about this. Please", he called as she grabbed her jacket on the couch.

"There's pizza in the kitchen. You can use my room if you're going to spend the night", Joyce said and then left.

Joyce got off the car and went inside the bar. Murray, who's been waiting outside, followed her inside. As usual, the place is packed. Murray kept his distance but he never took his eyes away from her. Joyce continued to work, serving drinks to people. She then went behind the bar and turned her back on everyone. Murray's alarm bells got set off. He walked closer to see what's happening. Joyce is breathing heavily like she's trying to compose herself. Then, she

turned back and resumed serving bottles like nothing happened. But unlike before, she's more alive this time. She's interacting more with the customers like she has known them for years.

A few minutes later, she's already taking shots of tequila with bikers at the corner. Murray frowned at the sight of it because that's far from the Joyce he knows. She lit up a cigarette and then pulled one of the bikers to the back of the bar. Murray followed the two quietly.

He can hear Joyce laughing from the back. It seemed weird that he's acting like a goddamn stalker right now but it is her request. He made a promise and he intends to keep it.

Murray found Joyce with the biker at the back making out wildly. Joyce removed the guy's jacket and kissed him all over his neck. At this point, Murray wanted to turn around and unsee everything but it's too late. Something caught his attention. Joyce's nose started bleeding. Murray looked around for anything that's moving on its own like the picture frames that fell in Joyce's house but he found none. He looked back at her. She pulled the guy's head towards her chest and smiled in a way she's never done before. It sent shivers down his spine. After a few minutes, the guy started trying to pull away from Joyce but she's holding him tightly. He struggled to move. Then, she grabbed his face and held it in front of hers.

"You're such a tough guy, John. You don't mind if I borrow that from you, do you?" Joyce asked.

Joyce suddenly put her hand around his neck and started choking the life out of him. Murray watched closely. It's not just any ordinary strangulation. Something else is happening. The guy started to grow pale and his veins can now be seen underneath his skin. His nose bleeds as well before he dropped unconscious on the ground. Joyce breathes in deep with a smile on her face. She casually wiped the blood off her nose and fixed her hair before returning to the bar.

Stunned, Murray gathered his courage to approach the guy on the ground. He's still alive but he's very weak. He is so pale and some strands of his hair turned almost white and he's not even blonde. Murray hurried back inside the bar and saw Joyce is already leaving. He ran after her outside.

"Joyce!" he called before she gets in her car.

She stopped and looked at him and he halted. It's not the same way she looks at him. It's like she's a different person. Then, she turned around and got in her car and left.

The morning came and Joyce woke up at the sound of the kids in the kitchen. She didn't wake up late this time, thank goodness. She didn't bother fixing her hair and changing her clothes. She went straight to the kitchen and found El and Will panicking on their burning pancakes on the stove.

"Hey...hey...that's not how you do it, kids. Let me do that", she intervened and two moved aside.

Joyce flipped the pancakes and then put them on their plates.

"There you go", she said.

"Thanks, Mom", the two said in unison.

Jonathan came in the kitchen and there's an awkward silence between them. She made the first move by handing him his plate.

"You don't remember what happened last night, do you?" he asked his mother.

Joyce frowned.

"What are you talking about? It's early in the morning, Jonathan. Please, don't start", she said.

He was about to start an argument with her when their door slammed open and Murray came in rushing.

"You and me...we need to talk right now", he said to Joyce.

5. Chapter 5

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA – Screams outside can be heard inside Hopper's cell. He used to cover his ears whenever they scream but he's grown immune to it. Now, he just ignored it completely. A minute later, the screaming stopped. Another Russian prisoner lost his life. The door opened and General Molotov came in with a smile on his face again.

"I believe you're not here for a chit chat, right?" Hopper greeted weakly.

"No, I am not...but I am here to inform you that we have found your friend in Illinois. My men told me she's living in Chicago with her sons and your daughter. They're working on taking her as we speak. Soon, you two will be reunited here", he informed him.

Hopper's blood boiled to a hundred degrees instantly. He launched at the general but the handcuffs on her wrists that were nailed to the wall prevented him from reaching the evil general.

"Calm down, Mr. Hopper. Frankly, I thought it will delight you. You and Joyce Byers will be together again but I guess you're not so happy about that. Anyway, I came here to deliver that news to you. Wish us luck", General Molotov said and then went out the cell.

"Stay the fuck away from her! You hear me! Don't you lay a finger on Joyce! You leave her alone!" Hopper yelled as the door closed.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS – The Byers family settled at the living room to listen on what Murray has to say. He laid out in details what he saw last night at the bar. They all listened carefully especially Joyce who obviously cannot remember everything he's telling them.

"The guy, is he alive?" Joyce asked.

"Yes. He is alive but weak. I saw his friends found him at the back and took him to the hospital", Murray answered.

Joyce sighed and buried her face on her hands. The guilt is overwhelming for her at the moment. Who knows how many more she sent to the hospital? The blackouts have been happening to her for weeks. She could have done to other people every single night.

"What happened last night when I came home?" Joyce asked Jonathan.

"I thought you were drunk because you're swaying while you walk and you're holding on to the walls. I tried talking to you but it's like you can't hear me. You can't even see me because you walked past by me. I followed you to your room and all you're saying was you need to kill the girl", he answered.

All turned to El in an instant. There is no other girl. The Mind Flayer came after her before and it cost them Billy and Hopper and a lot of people in Hawkins. It's not that hard to come into conclusion that she's the girl. Joyce started thinking very hard about what happened that night she blew off that machine. It couldn't just happen out of the blue. It must have started from that place. She recalled every single detail that night, how they got in the facility, the talk with Hopper, the vault, the fight between Hopper and the tall Russian guy, Hopper's face before she turned the keys...BAM!

Like a ball of fire came out of nowhere hit her hard on her chest and it sent her falling backwards. She fell hard on the floor hitting her head in the process. Due to adrenaline, she got back on her feet quickly to check on Hopper but there's still that blinding light coming from the machine and the explosion. Then, it's gone as well as Hopper. How could she not remember it back then? Maybe the grief about Hopper's death clouded her mind that she completely forgot of that weird thing that hit her. After all, it happened in a flash. She thought it's just impact. One thing is for sure, it came from the Upside Down and it came from that place, it means it came from the Mind Flayer.

Joyce quickly got off the couch and stepped back. The others followed her but she stepped back further.

"No! Don't come any closer. It's not safe being around me", she exclaimed.

"What are you talking about, Mom?" Will asked in panic.

"I remember it now. There's this thing, light, or fire...I can't remember what it was but it hit me, okay? It went straight through me when I blew off that machine. I saw it came from the gate. I thought it was nothing. I thought it was just in my head. I couldn't figure it out. Perhaps it's the impact from the explosion, I don't know. What I know is that it came from that place and if it's in me then I'm not safe to be around with anyone right now", Joyce started rambling.

Everyone can see that she's panicking and she's about to have an attack.

"We're not sure what happened, Joyce. You need to calm down", Murray said.

"Calm down? You heard what Jonathan said. He heard me saying that I need to kill the girl. Do you know any other girl that the Mind Flayer wants dead?" she exclaimed to Murray and then turned to El. "I am so sorry, honey, but I have to stay away. I can't let myself hurt you or any of you", she apologized.

Although scared, El is more hurting to see how conflicted Joyce is and it's all because of her. She is now her mother and she got into the mess that started because of her.

"It's not your fault. You don't have to go. We can find a way to stop this. We just need to stick together", El said.

"El's right, Mom. We can do this. We beat this thing before and we can do it again", Jonathan agreed.

Will walked to his mother and grabbed her hands.

"You got it out of me, remember? We're not leaving you. We will fight the Mind Flayer and we will win", he said.

Tears started falling from her eyes. Her kids had been through enough. They're just kids even Jonathan. They should be living normal lives and not thinking about how to destroy a monster from another dimension. Jonathan should be in New York and Will and El

should be in school right now socializing with their new friends. Joyce let go of Will's hands.

"I'm sorry but I can't stay. I need to stay as far as I can from all of you. It's the only way to keep El and everyone safe", she said.

"Mom...please..." Will pleaded but she's already walking backwards towards the door.

They tried to stop her from reaching it but Joyce waved her hand and they all flew backwards and landed on their backs. Stunned by what she did, Joyce shook it off and opened the door.

"I love you. I'm really sorry", she said and then left.

"Mom!" Will called out but she's gone.

Outside her house, Joyce ran towards her car but before she can even reach it, a couple of men appeared in front of her. She stopped running realizing they're not Americans. They're Russians. Before she can do anything, someone grabbed her from behind and stuck a needle on her neck and she fell unconscious.

6. Chapter 6

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS – Jonathan ran outside followed by the others. He looked around for any sign of his mother but he found none.

"Mom! Mom!" he called but even he knows it's pointless.

Murray's eyes gazed on Joyce's car parked casually in front of them.

"Jonathan", he called the young man. "She's gone", he muttered.

"What do you mean?" Jonathan asked.

"Her car is right here. She wanted to get as far away as she can from us. You think your mother will just walk?" Murray answered.

They all got what he meant.

"Who took my mother?" Will asked the question in all of their minds.

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA – The Russian soldiers moved Hopper to another cell. It's much bigger than the one he used to have and it's surrounded by mirrors. His best guess is it's a two-way mirror so they can watch him.

The door opened and the soldiers brought in another prisoner. Great...he now has a roommate, he thought. He rolled his eyes around and looked at the ceiling. It is so bright. He wondered why change the scenery. They have kept him in the dark for months and now they upgraded his cell. The soldiers left the room and locked the door. Suddenly, Hopper heard a familiar voice. He stiffened at first but braced himself for what he's about to see.

Joyce is in the same room as he is. She's lying on the floor partly unconscious. He cannot believe what his eyes are looking at. For a long time, he thought he will never see her again and now she's there with him. Hopper crawled fast towards her and checked if she's hurt. He didn't find any cuts or bruises on her arms and face. Her eyes are dilated which means they drugged her but she's about to come to.

She opened her eyes slowly and closed it right away when the light hit her eyes hard. She tried opening them again and this time, she saw a man over her. She cannot make his appearance yet because he appeared to her like a shadow. Her eyes are still adjusting. Few seconds later, his features sunk in to her mind. Her heart pounded fast.

"Hopper?" she muttered in disbelief.

Could it be really him? She saw it all happened. She turned the keys and that machine blew off and obliterated everyone down there. Dr. Owens said they didn't find his body but to her it's no brainer because it turned everyone into ashes. She saw it all. Now, he's leaning over her, looking at her directly in her eyes.

"Is it really you?" she asked.

"Yeah...I know it sucks but it's really me", he answered with a smile on his face.

Joyce chuckled at his joke and let the tears fell from her eyes. She's not crying because of sadness but because she's so happy to know he's actually alive. The feeling of guilt has been lifted from her chest. She didn't kill him. He's alive.

Hopper, too, is overwhelmed with joy to see her even though the situation is bad. He can see how relieved she is to know he's not dead. She must've blamed herself for what happened and it must've been so hard for her. He hates that he caused that pain on her. If only he can run faster, he would've made it out of there with her and not get caught by the fucking Russians.

"Where are we?" Joyce asked as she gets up and sat on the floor with him.

"We're in Russia", he simply answered.

"What? How did that happen? I was in Chicago with the kids and El and Murray..."

"Murray? What are you doing with Murray?" Hopper asked cutting her off.

Joyce studied his reaction and scoffed.

"Calm down. I am not dating him. He came to help me with some problems", she answered.

Hopper went serious. He put his ear against the mirror to listen if there's anyone watching on the other side and then he got back to Joyce.

"Tell me about those problems", he said.

Joyce went on to tell him everything that has happened since his 'death'. He listened very carefully having seen the footage from the lab, he needs to know everything.

"Hold on a second. You work in a bar?" Hopper asked.

"Jesus, Hopper. I told you all the crazy stuff that happened and you're stuck with me working in a bar? Is that so bizarre?" Joyce asked him back.

"Ah, yes. It is. We both know how you are when you're in that kind of environment", he answered.

"What do you mean by that?" she asked.

"Have you forgotten about Pool Hub?" he asked her back.

Joyce buried her face on her palms, "Oh god..." she muttered.

"Yeah...you asked me to smoke with you outside and when we went back in, you drank more than I did. You were so wasted", he elaborated.

"Well, you benefited from that drunken night, James Hopper", she snapped and it shocked the man.

"Hey...you know that's not why I slept with you that night. I always liked you. I still do, by the way", he defended himself and made Joyce laughed.

Once the laughter is over, she looked at him and the joy is gone from

her eyes. It is replaced by fear and worry.

"I know we're not in the best place right now and we're probably going to die here but for what it's worth, I'm glad I'm stuck in Russia with you", she said.

Hopper gently ran his fingers on her cheeks.

"Me too", he replied.

The door opened once again and a soldier came in with their food. He put it on the floor and spoke to them in Russian. He sounded as if he's trying to make them keep distance to each other.

"Calm down pal...you're making my ears hurt", Hopper said but the soldier cannot understand him as well.

Suddenly, Joyce got on her feet and walked slowly towards the soldier. He ordered her to back off and threatened to fire his weapon which is still in his holster. She doesn't seem to mind the threat as she keeps on going towards him.

"Joyce? What are you doing?" Hopper asked.

The soldier pulled out his gun and tried to point it at her but his fingers cannot pull the trigger. He let go of his gun and it fell on the floor. The soldier flew back and hit his back on the mirror wall behind him.

"Joyce?" Hopper called.

She reached out her right hand and the soldier started gasping for air. It didn't take long because she snapped his neck with a twist of her hand. The soldier fell lifeless on the floor. Hopper looked at Joyce through her reflection on the cracked mirror in front of her. Her eyes are black as night, her veins visible underneath her pale skin.

"Oh shit..." Hopper muttered.

7. Chapter 7

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS – Jonathan paced back and forth in their living room while El, Will and Murray are sitting on the couch waiting for him to stop or at least calm down.

"Let me get this straight. You came here to tell my mom that Hopper might still be alive and that he might be in Russia?" he clarified to Murray and he nodded.

"I don't understand. Joyce said she blew the machine and it killed Hopper", El said.

Though excited about the news, she doesn't want to get her hopes up in case it's false alarm of some kind.

"Yes. Dr. Owens and I have been working on this for weeks now. We want to keep it quiet until we're sure. There is no evidence that Hopper did die in that basement. They searched for any remains, test every strands they can find to match his DNA but there's nothing. He can't just disappear like that if he indeed died in that place. The others who did die have their DNA all over the place. He could still be alive and our theory is that he is being kept as a prisoner in Russia but now I don't think it's a theory anymore", Murray explained.

"Why not? You found new evidence?" Will asked.

"We intercepted a transmission coming from one of their secret bases here in America. Dustin's cerebro inspired Dr. Owens and his team so they replicated it and enhanced it so they can track those Russians hiding in our country. In one of the transmissions, the Russian broadcasted an order to find the woman who blew off the machine", Murray answered.

"Mom", Will muttered.

"Yes. They mentioned an American prisoner in their custody but they didn't give the name. The American prisoner told them that Joyce can be found in Illinois. Now, I know before things went to hell in that mall, Joyce told Hopper where she wanted to move to after it's all

over. So I came here as fast as I could to warn Joyce but I was greeted here by another problem so I wasn't able to tell her about Hopper", Murray added.

Jonathan joined them in the couch and started thinking about their next step in order to find his mother and possibly Hopper. They just couldn't do nothing. Dr. Owens is great and all but he can't handle it all by himself.

"We need to find their base", he muttered as soon as the idea crossed his mind.

"What base?" El asked.

"You said Dr. Owens used the replica of cerebro to intercept transmissions from their secret bases in our country. We need to find at least one of those bases", Jonathan answered.

Will's eyes widened.

"That's right. If we find their base, maybe we can find where they're keeping Mom and Hopper", he agreed.

Hope is finally radiating from El's eyes. The thought of being reunited again with her father and saving her mother is enough to make her hype to rescue them.

"We should call Mike and the others. They can help", she suggested.

"Involving other children is a bad idea because it's dangerous but given that you are no ordinary children, I will let it pass. Call them and I will call Owens about this", Murray agreed and they all dispersed.

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA – Hopper grabbed Joyce and pulled her into his arms to calm her down. She is breathing heavily after she killed the soldier without even touching him. He has dealt with someone with powers before. When they were first living in the cabin, El would sleepwalk at night and unconsciously used her powers. Joyce is not hearing a word he's saying so he figured it's the same thing. She could be sleepwalking in her mind and she's unaware of what

she's doing.

"Sssssshhhhh...it's okay, Joyce. I'm here. It's okay. You're okay", he whispered into her ears to calm her down.

Her skin feels so cold indication that she might be a new host because the Mind Flayer likes it cold. Joyce started shivering like the cold is finally getting into her.

"Hopper..." she muttered as she clings to him tighter. "What happened?" she asked as her body trembles.

"Don't worry about it for now. Just relax, okay? Don't think about anything else", he responded.

He knows she's not in any condition to deal with the fact that she just murdered a human being in a snap. She needs to regain herself first before he tells her about it.

An hour passed, Joyce is sleeping on Hopper's lap. The soldiers came in to check on them and saw their dead comrade. Fear immediately struck their eyes and took the dead soldier's body right away. Hopper is afraid as well, not of Joyce, no, he will never be afraid of her. He's afraid of Russians and what they will do to her now that they know what she can do. They brought her there for a reason and when it comes to them, that is not a good reason.

Joyce woke up and saw Hopper staring at the broken mirror on the wall.

"Hey", she called.

Hopper looked down on her and smiled.

"Hey", he greeted.

"What happened earlier? Did I have another blackout? Did I hurt you?" she asked.

"No. You didn't hurt me", he answered.

Joyce sat right up and saw the broken mirror.

"...but I did hurt someone else", she muttered once she realized what she's done.

The door opened once again and this time, there are a lot of soldiers who came in including the general.

"We hate to break your reunion but we need to talk to her", General Molotov said.

Hopper got on his feet and pulled Joyce behind him.

"No. You are not taking her. You hear me? You are not going to touch her", he warned.

Joyce looked so confused. She doesn't know any of these people. She is certain that they are Russians but she doesn't know what they want with her.

Even though Hopper is a strong man, he cannot take dozens of soldiers by himself. They eventually got Joyce and took her away from the cell.

They took her to a lab room not far from Hopper's new cell. Then, they let her go, no straps, no chains.

"What do you want with me? Why did you bring me here?" Joyce asked the general.

"You looked like you're more of a cooperative kind of person than your friend. Well, what we want is simple. We want you to show us what you can do. We want you to show us all the things you can do with your mind", he answered.

"...and if I don't?" she asked again.

"Surely by now you know I have men everywhere. If you don't cooperate, your children, all three of them, will die", he answered with a smirk.

8. Chapter 8

HAWKINS, INDIANA – Mike and the rest of the Party are already waiting outside the Wheeler's house when Jonathan, El, Will and Murray arrived. El immediately ran to Mike while Nancy greeted Jonathan with a warm hug. The rest of the Party went to Will to welcome him back.

"Okay, now, if everyone is done with their reunion hugs and kiss, shall we proceed inside and plan how are we going to deal with this new problem?" Murray interrupted them all.

"Right. My parents and my sister are out of town so we're good. Come on", Nancy said and they all went inside the house.

The Party has been briefed about what happened before the others reunited with them. Robin and Steve arrived half an hour later and they all filled them in. They need all the help they can get.

"They are in Russia. How on earth are we going to rescue them in Russia?" Steve asked the most obvious question.

"We don't need to get there. We just need to find their base here. Dr. Owens believed that there's another base here in Hawkins that they don't know about", Lucas answered.

Steve frowned and looked at Robin who's equally confused as he is.

"Okay. So what's finding the other base got to do with rescuing Chief Hopper and Mrs. Byers in Russia?" she asked.

"When the army arrived at the mall, they didn't find any Russians who were alive. They escaped. How can they escape so fast without anyone detecting them leaving town?" Dustin asked her back.

They looked at each other's eyes for a moment like they're communicating telepathically. The others waited.

"Another portal..." Robin muttered.

Although she's new, she caught up with them pretty fast and has been

very helpful. She's a very smart nerd.

"Sorry, another portal?" Max asked.

"That's the only explanation. They couldn't bring Chief Hopper to Russia in a flash. They will have to get him out of town and bring him to the airport but that will cause them a lot of trouble. There's got to be another portal or gate that leads to Russia", Robin explained.

"It's possible. It can be also the way they used to get to Hawkins in the first place. I mean no one detected them coming here, right?" Mike added.

Murray looked at the children bickering back and forth with ideas and theories so fast that he cannot follow.

"How can we be sure that there's another portal or gate? The only gate we know was the one that leads to another dimension and not to another country", he asked.

"That's right but what if they found a way to harness the power from the gate and make a version of it that can lead to different places? It is possible to copy technologies of other countries and improve them, right? It could be the same thing with the gate here. We don't know how long they've been under our town. They could've been here for more than a year and we just don't know it", Nancy answered.

"They could've been here since it all started", Jonathan muttered.

That statement triggered a memory on El. She remembered the time Dr. Brenner would ask her to find various people in the void. She never asked questions before but she noticed. They were all Russians and she can easily find them without breaking a sweat. At first, she thought she may just be that good with her powers but now she understands it. The reason she can find them that easy is because they're not in Russia. They're in Hawkins.

"She's right. They've been here since it started, even before I opened the gate", she said and everyone turned to her. "Papa used to ask me to find them and I always got to them so easy. I know now why. It's

because they're close. When I tried to look for my sister in the void, it took a lot of energy to do that because she's not in Hawkins. They were here. They could still be here", she added.

Murray laid out a huge map of Hawkins on the table.

"Well, it's time to go looking", he said.

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA – Exhausted, Joyce settled on the floor. Both of her nostrils are bleeding, including her ears. She's been using a lot of her energy and she's drained. Now, she knows what El used to feel whenever she uses her powers. It's not easy.

"Impressive, very impressive", General Molotov muttered as he claps his hands.

"Are we done here?" Joyce asked.

"Far from it. Forgive us but we are mad scientists. We have curious minds", he answered.

"I would've agreed with the word mad", she snapped and it made the general laughed.

The soldiers dimmed the lights and turned on the radio.

"We are hoping you can find people in that space...a void. It's supposed to be one of your abilities. We would like you to try", General Molotov said.

Joyce stiffened. She knows about all that. El did that in order to find Will to the Upside Down. It's also where El went when she saw a demodog for the first time. She got so scared that her powers opened the gate accidentally.

"You wanted to use me as your spy to your enemies", she concluded.

"You are very smart, Joyce Byers. No wonder you cracked our secret experiment. Now, if you please", he said.

Joyce hesitated at first but she doesn't want her kids to be in danger

so she obeyed. She closed her eyes and tried to concentrate. She's seen El do it. It should be easy.

THE VOID – Joyce looked around her and saw nothing but darkness. She looked down her feet and she's barefooted on water. She first visited Hopper in his cell. He's on the floor, leaning against the mirror wall. He's devastated and overflowing with guilt. She can see his bruised knuckles probably from punching the door to get to her. It breaks her heart to see him like that. She kneeled down and gently touched his face. Hopper looked stunned. He couldn't see her but he can feel her touch. He knows it's her.

Then, Joyce turned around and saw her kids at Wheeler's house. It confused her at first but then it made her relaxed. She knows they're safe there with their friends. They're talking seriously with Murray and Dr. Owens. They're planning something but Joyce is not concentrated on that. She's focus on El, her daughter.

She walked towards her and sat next to her. She has been through so much and now she's going through at it again. Joyce sighed and unconsciously put her arm around El's shoulders.

"Mom", El muttered.

Joyce looked at her and smiled. She held her hand firmly and everything and everyone around them disappeared. They both stood up and looked at each other's eyes. El, confused, looked around her and knew she's back in the void. Joyce closed her eyes and broke the radio in the lab to prevent the Russian from hearing them. She then looked at El with the same smile on her face.

"Hi, sweetie", she greeted.

9. Chapter 9

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA – The Russians are in panic trying to fix the broken radio. General Molotov is shouting in Russian, ordering his men. Another group of soldiers brought a new radio and plugged it in but few seconds after, it broke as well.

"We have no more", one of the soldiers said to the general.

"What the hell is she doing?" General Molotov muttered.

HAWKINS, INDIANA – Everyone is clamoring around El who has her eyes closed with her nose bleeding. No one can shake her to wake up.

"What is going on? I thought she lost her powers", Mike asked Jonathan and Will assuming they know the answer.

"We thought that too", Jonathan answered.

"She lost it. I know that. She constantly talks about it", Will answered.

"Then what the hell is happening?" Max asked.

THE VOID – El doesn't want to let go of Joyce's hands. She doesn't want her to disappear.

"I don't understand. How did I get here? I don't have my powers", she asked.

"I know it's confusing. I don't understand it as well but I have powers, sweetie and I need you to know that they are looking for you and your brothers. They wanted to hurt you", Joyce answered.

El can see the concern in her eyes. They are in danger. Her mom is in danger.

"We know you're in Russia. We have a plan. We think there's another gate here in Hawkins that leads to Russia. We can get you out of there", she said.

Joyce gently touched her face. She's so determined and she knows she can't make her stop.

"He's alive", Joyce mentioned.

That confirmation triggered a lot more determination on El's part. They have theory that Hopper is alive but they're not a hundred percent certain that he is. Now, it's official.

"We will get you out, both you", El said.

Joyce looked around seemingly feeling something's off.

"What is it?" El asked.

"I can't hold them off much longer", Joyce answered.

"The radio...you're blocking the Russians from listening", El guessed and Joyce nodded.

Joyce grabbed both of El's hand and held on to it extremely tight that it made El flinched a bit. She kept it for almost a minute but El did not complain. After that, Joyce looked and smiled at her daughter.

"Go. They need you back. Tell your brothers I love them", Joyce said.

"I will", El said.

"I love you, sweetie and your Dad loves you too", Joyce added.

El smiled and nodded.

"I love you guys too. Wait for us. We will come and get you", El replied and Joyce released her hands.

HAWKINS, INDIANA – El opened her eyes gasping for air. Mike wiped the blood off her nose quickly.

"Hey...you're okay. You're here with us", Jonathan said trying to calm her down. "What happened?" he then asked.

"Mom...I was talking with Mom", she answered.

Everyone got confused.

"How is that possible? You don't have your powers", Dustin asked.

Will recalled something that everyone seemed to forget.

"She doesn't but Mom has. She has powers. Do you remember when she pushed us all back so we wouldn't stop her from leaving? She has powers like El", Will said.

The memories came back to Jonathan and Murray. It made sense to them now.

"Mrs. Byers pulled you to the void so she can talk to you. What did she say?" Nancy asked El.

"She said Hopper is still alive", El answered.

Murray and Dr. Owens looked triumphantly at each other. Their theory is correct. The Party started throwing ideas once again all at the same time. Meanwhile, El is feeling a bit different. She can feel something in her gut that is strangely familiar. She got up from the couch, ignoring the brainstorming around her and went to empty a can of soda on the table. Max stopped talking and looked at what El's doing. Mike followed and so is the others.

El put the can on top of the table and stared at it. She put all of her focus on it and then, it crumbled on its own.

"El..." Mike muttered.

Though stunned, El realized now what just happened. She turned back to her friends.

"She gave them back to me...my powers. Mom just returned my powers", she muttered.

THE VOID – Joyce remained in the void all by herself. She's not moving at the spot she's standing on seems to be frozen. A loud growl was heard all throughout the void. It even came through the radio back in the lab. She felt a presence behind her so she turned around

only to see the Mind Flayer staring back at her. Joyce wanted to scream and get the hell out of there but she can't. She's stuck and she cannot move.

I have been waiting for you a long time, Joyce Byers.

It sent chills down her spine. The Mind Flayer is talking to her inside her mind.

What do you want? She asked.

I want you. I have always wanted you. For the longest time, I thought ways on how to free us from this place. I sacrificed a lot. All had been wrong choices. My answer is right in front of me.

Joyce cannot understand what it meant. It's all scribble for her. Is it sane to actually entertain talking to that monster?

Bring me the girl and you and your family will be safe.

She knows the Mind Flayer wants El. It always wants El.

No. I will not let you have her, she refused.

That is not a request. That is your purpose. You have the power so you can do what others failed to do.

Then take it! I don't want it! Joyce exclaimed.

Too late, Joyce Byers. You are mine now and you will do anything I pleased.

The Mind Flayer surrounded Joyce with its black smoke until she cannot be seen anymore.

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA – Joyce is lying on the table as the lights flickered around them. All they can hear from the new radio is the sound of growling. Joyce's nose continues to bleed as well as her ears. Then, Joyce opened her eyes and screamed making everything around them explodes.

10. Chapter 10

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA – Hopper is inside his cell praying to all the saints he knew the names for Joyce to be fine. He has no idea what they're doing to her. El spent most of her life in a lab and it scarred her. She constantly gets nightmares every night because of it. He doesn't want that for Joyce as well. She has been through a lot, horrible parents, bad marriage, missing son, possessed son, his 'death'. He doesn't how much more she can take before she breaks.

In his contemplation, the lights started acting funny. Hopper got up and studied the lights. It's not electrical problems because it has never happened before. It's a Russian base which means they work to prevent this kind of problems. No. It's not that. It's Joyce. She's doing it. He knows she has powers now like El and he has seen El caused a lot of damage especially in the electrical department.

"Hey! Hey! What's going on?" Hopper yelled for anyone to hear him outside but no one responded.

Then just like that, the light bulbs exploded and his cell door opened.

Hopper didn't waste time and took the opportunity to get out of his cell. It might have been long since he used his legs to their full extent but they caught up fast. It must have been the adrenaline. One soldier caught him running and started yelling for him to stop. Hopper obliged and stayed put. When the soldier reached him, he knocked him off and grabbed his gun.

All hell breaks loose in the ward as all the cells had been opened. The malfunction must've messed with the doors' locks. It's the chance he needs to get Joyce out. The Russians will be distracted by the prisoners all trying to escape.

Hopper scoured all rooms to find Joyce until it leads him to a huge lab room at the east wing. He can hear the soldiers screaming in panic. A few doctors ran in panic away from it. He peeked and saw soldiers being thrown against the wall. When he decided to come in, he saw Joyce holding people up in the air while the others trying to fire their guns on her but the bullets never seemed to reach her body.

Then she twisted her hand and it snapped all of the soldiers' necks who were floating in the room. They all hit the floor lifelessly as the bullets hit those who fired them at the same time.

Everyone seemed to be dead except the general who is hiding behind the shelf. Joyce turned around and Hopper felt like something is holding him in place. Is it fear? Is he afraid of Joyce? He knows she will never hurt him. He knows her. Joyce threw the shelf out of the way revealing the general hiding in fear. She reached out her hand and the general floated in the air as she brings him closer to her.

"Why are you hiding? Isn't this what you wanted? You said you want me to show you everything that I can do with my mind. I am doing it, ain't I?" Joyce asked.

"This is enough! You will stop or your children will die!" General Molotov threatened.

Joyce smirked at the threat.

"Yeah? They're not Chicago anymore, General. Even if your men find them, I'm not the only one with powers. They got help which is more than I can say for you", she replied and slowly breaks each of his bones in his body.

The agonizing scream is too much for Hopper's ears. He is no stranger to beating people and sometimes killing them especially when he needs to but that is worse than killing. It's worse than anything he's seen and that should say something for someone who's been to Vietnam.

"Joyce, stop", he intervened but she didn't listen. "Joyce", he called again but she didn't look his way.

Hopper gathered all the strength he has.

"Joyce Horowitz, stop it right now!" he yelled and it snapped Joyce from her dark thoughts.

He only calls her by her full name during urgent matters and that definitely qualifies. The general dropped on the floor. She looked at him with regret and shame in her eyes but at the same time, she's

filled with anger and he can see that too. Before she can finish the job, Hopper shot the general in the head killing him in an instant.

"I cannot let you become someone you will never recover from", he said to her.

Joyce smiled understanding his point. Hopper went to her and helped her walk as the exhaustion of using her power is finally catching up with her. She told him about the other gate El told her about so they can use it to go back to Hawkins.

"Wait", she stopped Hopper from walking when she saw the stairs going down the basement.

"What?" he asked.

"There's something I need to do first before we leave", she answered and he let her go.

Hopper followed Joyce down the basement. It's like a maze which leads to a cage. Hopper can already smell the blood coming from the floor. Joyce opened the cage and she went in. Before Hopper can follow, she already closed it.

"Joyce? What are you doing?" he asked in protest.

"I'll be fine, Hopper. I promise", she answered.

The other door opened and from it came out the demodog the Russians had been hiding. Hopper stepped back upon seeing it. It must've been the one killing the other prisoners. They're feeding it with humans. It looks a lot different from the ones they saw in Hawkins. Those got dark skins and moved like a dog but the one they're looking at has pale skin and move like an actual human being.

"Joyce", Hopper called as he readies his gun.

She just looked at him as it tries to recognize her. It moved slowly measuring if she's a threat, a food, or something else. Then, Joyce closed the door where it came from and the demodog growled at her. She got it frozen in mid air when it tried to attack her. It sensed that she is a threat after all. Joyce slammed it on the wall and killed it by

breaking its neck and crushing its heart. Right...even a monster got heart. After that, Joyce opened the door and she came out of the cage.

"Are you okay?" Hopper asked as he wiped the blood off her nose.

"Yeah...a little tired though", she answered.

"We'll be home soon. Come on", he said and they resumed moving.

It wasn't long before they found the other gate. It's also in the basement just a couple of meters away from the cage. The control room is already abandoned and there's no soldiers to stop them. The controls are all in Russian but Hopper figured that the destination is already set in Hawkins as it showed: **Хокинс, Индиана.**

"Shall we?" Hopper asked Joyce and she nodded.

"Let's go home to our kids", she answered and together they jumped back to the gate.

11. Chapter 11

HAWKINS, INDIANA – The Party reached the Russian secret base in Hawkins which happened to be situated just underneath their school. Thanks to Scott Clarke's brilliant radio transmission tracker idea, Dr. Owens along with Murray the Party, they were able to build a tracker that lead them to an abandoned barn in the middle of the woods. As usual, a secret door on its floor lead them to a huge basement that goes underneath Hawkins High.

Dr. Owens called up his team prior to going down the basement for reinforcement. The place is not packed with soldiers compare to the previous base underneath the mall. Instead, it is filled with scientists running experiments on various of things, animals, plants. They all moved in a stealth way until they reached a huge control room even bigger than the other base.

"Is that the gate?" Max muttered and everyone nodded.

It's her first time seeing it up close. It's the Party's first time as well except for Will who came out of it last time when his mother and Hopper got him out of the Upside Down. Though this time, the gate is different. It's not glowing with red light. Its surrounding is not decaying. Blue light is coming out of the gate and it seemed to be spinning inside.

"What are we going to do now?" Will asked Dr. Owens.

"We need to get to that control panel and set the destination correctly. It will open up the gate on the other side", he answered.

Will nodded and went to his friend to formulate a plan. They did have a plan but it only lasted to the part of them getting in the base.

"We will create diversion so you can get to the control panel. You guys will be okay to set the destination?" Mike asked Murray and Dr. Owens.

"Yeah, we can do it. I speak Russians, remember?" Murray answered.

They smiled at each other and the Party went out. Jonathan and Steve remained in the room as guards. Mike and the others set off a fire at the hallway setting off the alarm. The scientists started following the protocol and the control room has been emptied.

"Guys, they are coming out of the barn. I repeat. They are coming out of the barn", Nancy said through the radio.

She and Robin are stationed outside by the car in case something goes wrong, they got the car ready to escape.

El began using her powers knocking off soldiers that crossed their paths while the others set traps along the way. Jonathan and Steve guarded the door to the control room to give Dr. Owen and Murray time and protection.

"Are you sure you can do this?" Dr. Owens asked him.

"Why are you people always doubting my skills? It's not like I'm getting paid to do this. This is charity work", Murray exclaimed.

"Alright...alright...do your thing", Dr. Owen didn't protest anymore.

Murray started playing with the controls until he got the destination right. The gate glowed even more and its inside stopped spinning. A few minutes later, they can see two figures coming out of the gate. It took them a moment before their eyes adjusted to the light and realized it's Joyce and Hopper.

"Oh my god...Jim! Joyce!" Murray called as they went to them.

"Hey, help me. Joyce collapsed while we're in there. She must've been so drained. She used a lot of her powers back there", Hopper said to them.

Dr. Owens and Murray took few seconds to take in the change in Hopper's appearance but they recovered quickly.

"Hey, we got them. They're here", Murray broadcasted to the radio.

Two minutes later, they all came in running inside the room. El jumped onto Hopper as soon as she saw him while Will and Jonathan

looked after their mother who is still unconscious.

"Welcome back, Chief", Mike greeted him and Hopper smiled and nodded at the young boy.

"What happened?" Jonathan asked.

"Your Mom fought them all. I think she's exhausted", Hopper answered.

"Well, we should get out of here in case they returned", Dr. Owens said.

"We can't just leave yet", all turned to Dustin. "We need to destroy this place especially that gate or the Russians will use that again to do some damage", he added.

They know he's right. It's the doorway to Russia and more will just come through it and the fight will not stop. They will always be in danger especially now that they know Joyce and El got powers.

"I can destroy it", El volunteered.

Mike is about to protest but there's no other option. Joyce is unconscious and she's used a lot of her powers in Russia. In no time, Russian reinforcement will come so they have to move fast. He nodded to El giving her the signal to do it.

"Dad?" El asked for her father's permission.

"You can do it, kiddo", he answered and she smiled.

El then turned to the gate and used her power on it forcing it not to close but to overpower. They started hearing explosions on the other side of the gate. She's destroying it from their end working her way to theirs. The blue light glowed brighter and brighter until it dimmed and the gate shut down.

"You did it!" Lucas shouted.

"Yeah..." El replied slightly weakened by the act but she's happy she was able to do it.

"Well, now we really have to go", Dr. Owens said.

HAWKINS GENERAL HOSPITAL – Joyce has been confined as per Dr. Owens' instructions. He pulled some strings to occupy one wing of the hospital so there would be no interference from any civilians. He constantly checks Joyce's vitals who appears to be stable but for some reason, she's not waking up.

"Why isn't she waking up?" Jonathan asked.

"We're not sure. All the test results came back negative. If we're going to base it on her stats, I'd say she's a perfectly healthy woman. One thing is a bit off, her brain waves. I tried attaching it earlier and monitored a good half an hour of her brain waves and it's spiking", Dr. Owens answered.

"Spiking?" Hopper asked who is still in his hospital gown and attached to a dextrose.

"Yes. You've seen Will's when he was possessed by the Mind Flayer and it's a lot higher than that. She's unconscious yet her brain is working continuously like she's in a never ending dream", he answered.

"What could she possibly be dreaming about?" Hopper asked again as they all turned to look at Joyce.

UPSIDE DOWN – Joyce is sitting by the large stone near the lake. She's staring blankly at the decaying environment she's in like it doesn't bother her at all, like the place is normal for her. Then, the Mind Flayer came behind her. She slowly turned around and looked at it without any fear in her eyes.

It's time.

"Of course", she replied.

12. Chapter 12

HAWKINS GENERAL HOSPITAL – They took shifts in spending time inside Joyce's room. All the kids wanted to be there for her especially El and Will. Hopper's room is right next to hers so visiting Joyce is easy since he needed to move a lot after being locked up in a small space for months.

"She dozed off an hour ago", Jonathan whispered to Hopper when he got in the room.

"Where's Will?" he asked.

"He went home to the Wheeler's for the night. I told him he should rest", Jonathan answered.

"Okay. I'll stay here. You can take El to my room so she can lie down. There's a long couch there too for you. Don't worry. I'll let you know if something came up here", Hopper instructed the young man and he followed willingly.

Jonathan carried El and took her to Hopper's room. Joyce is still unconscious and the screen next to her shows that her brainwaves are still spiking. Hopper sat next to her just watching her sleep. She looked peaceful. It must've been long since she got a good night sleep. Murray filled him in on Joyce's state after his 'death'. She took it very hard since she blamed herself for it. Then, there's the job at the bar which prevented her from getting that sleep.

Suddenly, her brainwaves stopped moving. Hopper got alarmed by the change. He pressed the button on the wall to call for Dr. Owens. Then, Joyce finally opened her eyes.

"Hey, it's okay. It's okay. You're in the hospital", Hopper said stopping Joyce from removing the device on her head.

She looked at him and smiled recognizing the man that continuously saving her and her kids.

"Are we back home?" she asked.

"Yeah...we're back here in Hawkins", he answered with a smile.

Then, the smile vanished from Joyce's face. She grabbed Hopper's arm and squeezed tight.

"You shouldn't have brought me back", she muttered in a cold voice.

Hopper frowned at her. Before he can say anything, Dr. Owens came in with Murray.

"I'll call Jonathan", Murray said excitedly and left the room.

"How are you feeling, Joyce?" Dr. Owens asked.

Joyce let go of Hopper's arm and turned to Dr. Owen still got the cold look on her face.

"Better. My head is pounding though", she answered.

Dr. Owens checked her stats on the monitor and frowned while looking at the screen of her brainwaves. He then picked up his flashlight and checked her eyes.

"What?" Hopper asked studying his expression.

"Nothing. It's just that her eyes are dilated like she's under a strong drug but we didn't give her any", he answered and then turned to Joyce. "You don't feel lightheaded or funny?" he asked Joyce and she shook her head.

Dr. Owens removed the device on her head while Jonathan and Murray returned to the room.

"Mom, you're awake", Jonathan said with a smile on his face but his mother didn't return it. "Oh, I would've woken up El but she just fallen asleep", he added.

Joyce clenched on the bed sheet which Hopper noticed. Jonathan went on and on about Will and El being excited to have them back and how they will read stories when she was unconscious. Her grip on the sheet became tighter and tighter.

"Stop..." she muttered under her breath.

Jonathan kept on going.

"Stop..." she muttered again.

Hopper frowned observing what's going on.

"Stop!" Joyce yelled and everyone stopped.

"What's wrong, Mom?" Jonathan asked.

"You shouldn't have brought me back. He's in my head and I don't want to do it. He wants so bad...he just wants so bad..." Joyce started rambling.

"Who wants what, Joyce?" Dr. Owens asked.

Hopper got on his feet once he realized what she meant. Joyce sat right up as she pulled the needles from her skin like their nothing.

"He wants the girl! He wants the girl! You just brought me right to her!" Joyce screamed.

"El", Hopper muttered.

Joyce struggled to keep herself together as she held on to the sheets. Meanwhile, El got woken up by the noise on the other room so she decided to go on and check on Joyce.

"What's happening to her?" El asked that startled all of them.

Joyce shifted her gaze from the bed to El in a flash. The hunger is right there in her eyes but she's doing her best to control it. She then turned to Hopper who is looking right at her.

"Get her out of here...please..." Joyce said to him and he didn't have to think it through. He ran to El, picked her up and ran away.

"Go!" Joyce yelled to all of them giving them a head start.

Murray grabbed Jonathan and Dr. Owen and they all followed Hopper outside and went inside the elevator.

"What's going on? What's happening to Mom?" El asked in panic, confused at what's happening.

"The Mind Flayer. It got her", Hopper simply answered.

"She needs to kill the girl", Jonathan muttered.

"What?" Dr. Owens asked.

"That's what she kept repeating that night when she came home from the bar, when I followed her to her room. She kept repeating that she needs to kill the girl", Jonathan answered.

"That was the night she almost killed that guy in the bar", Murray recalled.

"She's activated", El intervened. They all looked at her. "That's what Will said when he was the host. At first, he was dormant and he will be activated when the Mind Flayer needed him", she explained.

"She left home to get away from El and I took her back to you", Hopper muttered.

"Hey...don't do that. We'll get through this. We just need to get out of here and we'll figure out how to help Joyce like we did with Will", Dr. Owens said to him.

Meanwhile, Joyce remained in her room trying her best to fight the Mind Flayer in her brain but she ran out of strength and he won. She let go of the sheets and casually got out of bed. She picked up her clothes and got dressed. Then, she faced the mirror and saw the blood flowing from her arm. It's because she ripped the needles from it earlier. She wrapped a clean cloth around it and fixed her hair.

"Let's go hunting", she muttered to her reflection on the mirror.

13. Chapter 13

HAWKINS, INDIANA – Murray drove in circles throughout town unsure on where to go since they Joyce knows pretty much all the places they could hide. She knows about Hopper's cabin as well so that's out of the options.

"We can't just do this forever, Murray. We need to go somewhere", Dr. Owens said.

"I'm thinking!" Murray exclaimed.

Eventually, Joyce will find them soon and if that happens, she will get to El. Then, Murray stopped the car in the middle of the street.

"What are you doing?" Hopper asked him.

"She wants her", Murray muttered.

"Yeah, she does that's why we need to go", Hopper said.

"No. I mean she wants her. No matter where we go, Joyce will find us because she wants her so badly so why not let her find us", Murray suggested.

Hopper got confused.

"Are you out of your mind? Joyce clearly said that the Mind Flayer wants El dead and you want Joyce to find her?" he asked.

"You're not getting my point. None of this will stop until we help Joyce just like what happened with Will. Luckily before, Will was just a spy. Now, Joyce is somewhat like Billy only worse because she has powers. We will face her one way or another. The only question is, are you willing to prolong it and let other people get hurt in the process or face it now and help Joyce and save your daughter?" Murray explained then asked him back.

It made sense to them all. Billy never stopped back then. Once the Mind Flayer had his hosts onto something, there's no stopping them. They can keep running but Joyce will follow them everywhere. They

will risk other people getting hurt including the other kids.

Hopper looked at El for approval. She nodded understanding the situation. She wanted to help her mother so badly too.

"How are we going to do your plan?" Hopper asked.

"We need to lure her to a place where we can trap her. Then, we can try to free her from the Mind Flayer", Murray answered.

"Heat her up just like Will", Jonathan added.

"That's right", Murray agreed.

"The lab", Dr. Owens suddenly said. "There is a machine there that acts like a sauna but way hotter. We only used it when disposed those remains of the demodogs that fell after Eleven closed the gate. We can trap Joyce in there and set it off", he added.

"Hawkins Lab it is...god, I always hated that place", Hopper muttered.

WHEELER'S HOUSE – The Party is at the basement resting. It's the middle of the night and they've been up late last night in the hospital. The door opened silently. Will is sleeping on the couch separate from the others.

"Will", someone called. "Will", he opened his eyes and gasped when he saw his mother looking at him.

"Mom? What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be at the hospital?" he asked.

"Something happened. We've been attacked there. Hopper told me to go here to be safe. He, your brother and El went the other way and I cannot find them", she answered.

Will got out of the couch and woke the rest of the Party. He told them what his mother told them and they all went on full alarm.

"How can we find them?" Mike asked.

"I don't know. I was hoping you can contact El or Murray through your radio. El is very weak. She used a lot of her power and she's going to need me to back her up", Joyce lied.

Mike bought it completely and ran to his radio. He started calling out for El and Murray but no one responded. It took them a good fifteen minutes before Jonathan picked up on the other side.

"Mike?" Jonathan answered.

"Hey, it's me. Where are you guys? We heard you're in danger. Over", Mike asked.

"We're here at Hawkins Lab. Look, you have to stay put there, okay? We're going to handle this. Keep the radio close in case we need help. Over", Jonathan answered.

Mike looked at Joyce.

"What are they doing at the lab?" he asked her.

"They must thought of luring that thing in there so El can fight it. She's not strong enough. I need to get there", Joyce said.

Will grabbed his mother's hand to stop her from leaving.

"What if you get hurt?" he asked.

"Sweetie, don't worry about me. I will not. Listen to Jonathan. You guys stay here and keep the radio close. Do you understand?" she asked them all and they all agreed knowing it's not good to argue with someone who has powers.

Joyce put a kiss on Will's forehead and left the house.

"Don't worry. Help is on the way. Just tell El to stay put and do not exhaust her powers. Mrs. Byers is on the way to help fight the monster. Over", Mike said to the radio.

"What did you say, kid? Over", Hopper asked grabbing the radio from Jonathan.

"I said, Mrs. Byers is on the way to help fight the monster. Over", Mike repeated.

"Are you guys okay? Does anyone get hurt? Over", Jonathan suddenly asked.

The kids got confused by the question.

"No. We're fine. What's going on? Over", Mike asked.

"We're not fighting any monster. My mom is after El. She's the new host and she's activated. Over", Jonathan answered.

Mike looked at the rest of his friends in shock.

"Oh shit..." he muttered.

Fear ran across their faces. The idea of Joyce being the enemy scares them all not because of what she can do but because they're afraid she will get hurt like what happened with Billy. El got through him and when he tried to fight back, the Mind Flayer killed him. What if Joyce decided to fight back and the Mind Flayer kills her? They all love her and to them, she's the ultimate Mom of the Party. They couldn't begin to imagine the world without her.

Will put his hand behind his neck wondering why he didn't sense that his mother is activated. He usually sensed it before it happens but this it's different. Then, he got his answer. It's because she's his mother. He's blinded by that fact and it prevented him from sensing the monster controlling his mother.

"Guys, you do know what just happened, right?" Dustin asked them all and they all looked at him sharing the same expression. "We just told Mrs. Byers where to find El", he added.